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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA A/S TOM SHANNON; ELAINE SAMSON, EUR/WE

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#)  
SUBJECT: SPAIN AND LATIN AMERICA: VALEDICTORY TOUR  
D'HORIZON

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Hugo Llorens, for reasons 1.4 (b)  
) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The DCM paid a farewell call on Spanish Secretary of State for IberoAmerican Affairs Trinidad Jimenez on July 1 and took the opportunity to exchange views on recent events in the Western Hemisphere. The meeting was substantive and lasted well over an hour. The two discussed FM Moratinos's June 17-18 visit to Colombia and Venezuela and Jimenez's trip to Ecuador, ongoing protests in Argentina, opportunities for the United States and Spain to collaborate with Mexico and Central American countries on security issues, and Cuba. As usual, Jimenez was cordial and open, and although aware of the challenges facing Latin America, was overall optimistic about the medium-term prospects in the region. Reviewing our shared goals, both Secretary of State Jimenez and the DCM were hopeful for future opportunities for U.S.-Spanish engagement in the region, including the next Working Group which Jimenez hoped would take place in September on the margins of the UNGA. End summary.

//The Merida Initiative//

12. (SBU) The DCM opened by stressing the importance of the United States and Spain working together to support democracy by seeking ways to strengthen the rule of law and promote judicial reform in Latin America. The DCM cited Foreign Affairs Secretary of State Angel Lossada's June 26 meetings in Washington with the Deputy Secretary and with WHA A/S Shannon. Jimenez said Lossada had briefed her on these meetings. She agreed that judicial reform and rule of law were vital issues in the region and had a prominent place in EU and Spanish development portfolios in Latin American countries. She stressed Spain's continuing future resource commitment in this area and promised to provide us with a portfolio of these kinds of projects throughout the region. In response to the DCM's brief, she was extremely positive about the U.S. effort to further increase support for Mexican and Central American efforts to fight drug trafficking and organized crime through the Merida Initiative. She cited the critical importance for the region of President Calderon's success in his tenacious fight against the drug bands. Jimenez expressed great concern about the deteriorating situation in Central America and agreed that making headway against corruption and crime were critical to restoring stability in the region.

//Recovering "Formality" with Venezuela, et al//

13. (C) Asked about Foreign Minister Moratinos's June trip to Venezuela and Colombia, Jimenez responded that Spain's purpose had been to "recover a certain formality" and to diminish tensions before the next IberoAmerican Summit, in which the Spanish King will participate. Jimenez said that in this visit Chavez had been unusually moderate, avoiding rhetorical excesses, and expressing interest in normalizing relations with Spain. She described the principal issues on the agenda as bilateral and principally related to supporting Spanish business interests and ensuring the protection of Spanish citizen properties in Venezuela. Jimenez described Chavez as "a brute, but not a stupid one." Chavez recognized that having lost the December 2007 referendum, his leadership position had been weakened. She said that Moratinos had invited Chavez to Spain, in connection with a trip by Chavez to the Water Expo in Zaragoza, in an effort to smooth over relations between the King and Chavez -- an effort the King supported. (Embassy Comment: We understand that Chavez is scheduled to visit Spain on/about July 21. The media report he will meet with King Juan Carlos I on July 25 in Palma de Mallorca, and will come to Madrid the same day to meet with President Zapatero.) The DCM raised U.S. concerns about Chavez and particularly his growing ties with Iran. Jimenez agreed that Venezuela's relations with Iran needed to be monitored, but noted that ultimately the two countries did not have much in common because of culture and the fact that both were principally energy exporters. She hastened somewhat naively to point out that despite economic dealings with Iran, Venezuela's economic ties with the U.S. would remain paramount. The DCM stressed the importance of Spain's not selling arms or weapons systems to Venezuela, which would send destabilizing signals around the region.

14. (C) Regarding the state of relations between Venezuela, Colombia, and Ecuador since the early March border conflict, Jimenez stated that despite the huge political differences between Chavez and Uribe, paradoxically in the past both Presidents actually had developed a measure of personal rapport. Certainly, national interest suggested that both nations needed to maintain good relations. She cited the fact that Venezuela was very dependent on Colombia as its principal supplier of foodstuffs, a fact that Chavez appeared mindful of at a time that Venezuela faced severe food shortages. Jimenez insisted that Uribe had even managed to maintain open lines of communication with Cuba's Fidel Castro, developed over the years and related to peace talks with the ELN. The biggest problem in this diplomatic jigsaw, according to Jimenez, was the poor state of relations between Ecuador and Colombia, and personally between President Correa and President Uribe. Jimenez described as excellent Foreign Minister Moratinos, visit to Colombia and meetings with President Uribe in Cali. Jimenez mentioned that Spain had offered to be helpful in easing tensions over the border with Ecuador, and had offered to provide a radar in order to ensure better border communication between the two countries. In her visit to Quito, Jimenez said Ecuadorian President seemed most concerned about salvaging his international image damaged by evidence linking him and his government to the FARC.

15. (C) Jimenez asserted President Zapatero was keen on strengthening ties with the troubled Andean region. Of the Andean nations, Bolivia was the most worrisome for Spain. She did not see Bolivia breaking up, but did see the potential for violence between the regions as a real possibility. While President Evo Morales might be strengthened by any referendum, it seemed to Jimenez that Morales had "thrown in the towel" and was no longer fighting the prefects. She noted that Morales appeared to be looking for external enemies such as USAID to detract from his domestic problems. Overall, however, Spain and Europe had reason to be optimistic as things were "settling" throughout Latin America. Young democracies that had not yet performed well needed time to consolidate their maturing democracies, yet Jimenez judged there was a low risk of back-sliding in most countries of the region. Jimenez and the DCM agreed

that the recent mob attack on the U.S. Embassy was of grave concern and seriously weakened the credibility of the Bolivian government to guarantee the security of diplomatic missions.

//Argentina//

16. (C) Regarding Argentina, Jimenez said President Cristina Kirchner had canceled a planned July 14 visit to Spain due to the conflict with the farmers. Jimenez agreed that Argentina had once again lost an opportunity to move its economy forward. She called Kirchner's response to the ongoing farm protests a shame for such a great and resource-rich country and said she hoped that there would be a viable and organized opposition. She lamented the weakness of Argentine political parties and noted she was troubled by the "unionized" opposition mounted in the countryside by the farmers, which she said threatened chaos. Jimenez opined that part of the problem was Cristina's over-reliance on former President Nestor Kirchner, whose confrontational approach to politics was exacerbating the crisis.

//Cuba//

17. (C) Turning to Cuba, Jimenez expressed hope the EU's strategy would be successful and would generate positive change. The DCM voiced the Administration's skepticism that these measures would generate positive response from Raul Castro. Jimenez expressed the hope that if real change were evident, Washington might be able to adjust its own approach. The DCM assured her that if Cuba embarked on a genuine path of political reform, the U.S. was ready and had a plan to engage and provide support. Jimenez echoed opinions heard previously in our past discussions on Cuba, insisting that the international community could not merely wait for change but must talk to the regime and push directly in order for changes to come. The DCM said the USG was pleased that a

wide spectrum of EU countries had participated in the June review process and that the declaration was cautious, mentioned prisoners of conscience, and included at a minimum the one-year evaluation mechanism.

//Latin American Working Group//

18. (C) Jimenez expressed hope that Spain would further strengthen its relationship with the United States so that in a global scenario, the whole Western Hemisphere will become one pole: (just) America. She noted that in all of her meetings with Latin American leaders, she stressed the importance of having strong relations with the U.S. as essential to maintaining hemispheric cohesion, which was good for the region and in Spain's interest. Jimenez said her office would continue to work with WHA A/S Shannon to bridge the gap in our perspectives through the end of the Bush Administration. She told the DCM she looked forward to going to Washington in September in conjunction with her travel to New York for the UN General Assembly. Jimenez planned to spend the first few days with President Zapatero at the UN and return for the LAWG at the end of the week, but saw no need to stay in New York for bilateral meetings with Western Hemisphere leaders who frequently come to see her in Spain. Asked by the DCM if she would still be interested in visiting Southern Command in Miami, she demurred vaguely saying that "they" would think it wrong. She said it was important nonetheless to maintain contact with the Cuban community in Miami and to have a presence -- even if her interlocutors were critical of Spanish policy. Jimenez and the DCM agreed that both Spain and the United States had common political and economic interests in Latin America and needed to continue to work closely together. The DCM noted that A/S Shannon's numerous visits to Europe demonstrated our interest in working closely with Europe on Latin America.

19. (C) COMMENT: Jimenez appeared increasingly confident in her role as Spain's senior policymaker on Latin America and will remain our principal interlocutor in the region. It will be important to continue to work with her and influence

her on issues of mutual interest.  
Aguirre